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Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Planning Methodologies and Techniques for the Development of Rural Settlements

Addis Ababa, 5-9 December 1988

A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The expert group meeting on planning methodologies and techniques for the development of rural settlements was held at ECA, Addis Ababa from 5 to 9 December, 1988.

2. The meeting was attended by invited experts from Ethiopia and Nigeria.

3. The following member States were represented at the meeting by observers: Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan and Uganda.

Election of Officers (agenda item 1)

4. Mr. K.E.O. Iloabuchi of Nigeria was elected Chairman of the meeting. The representative of ECA was elected as rapporteur.

Opening of the meeting (agenda item 2)

5. In his opening address, the representative of the United Nations under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed the delegates, and stressed the need for studies aimed at the development of policy guidelines on a methodological and operational basis for concerted action towards achieving the transformation of rural settlements. He highlighted the plight of the rural poor who constitute the majority of the African population and expressed the hope that the challenge to transform the rural hinterland will be shared not only by African governments but by the international development community as well. He wished the participants a very fruitful meeting.

B. Agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

6. The meeting adopted the following agenda for its deliberations:

1. Election of officers
2. Opening of the meeting
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
4. Evolution of rural settlements in Africa
5. Land use planning in rural areas
6. Modalities for the construction of infrastructure and provision of transportation facilities
7. Cost implications of rural transformation
8. Adoption of the report and closure of the meeting

C. Account of proceedings

Evolution of rural settlements in Africa (agenda item 4)
Presentation of papers

7. Presentations were made on this topic by the participants from Ethiopia and Nigeria. The participant from Ethiopia noted that settlements in that country, like in other African countries, had been largely rural with about 90 per cent of the population residing in such areas and engaging in agriculture which constituted more than 45 per cent of GDP. Following the 1974 revolution the government promulgated a proclamation which nationalised all rural lands and granted farmers use rights over cultivable lands measuring up to 10 hectares.

8. Since then, two major policy measures have led to the restructuring of rural settlements. The national villagization programme was borne out of the need to bring together nucleated and scattered homesteads into such economic sizes as would facilitate the provision of infrastructures and services, as well as improved agricultural and rural technologies. Another programme which has led to the re-organization of rural space is the settlement programme for rural dwellers with degraded, little or no land. Among the objectives of the resettlement programme were: helping the settlers to attain food self-sufficiency and to produce agricultural surpluses for domestic and international markets. The participant from Ethiopia added that the objectives of the villagization and settlement programmes were consistent with those of national socio-economic aspirations for rural settlements and that these programmes constituted a vehicle for positively contributing to the advancement of overall national development.

9. In his presentation, which laid emphasis on the evolution of rural development policy, the participant from Nigeria stated that the integrated development of the rural areas, where 85 per cent of the population live, had not received any special focus until 1986 when the government outlined a new rural development policy which stated that: rural development policy would move away from past narrow sectoral pre-occupation with the generation of food and fibre surpluses to the overall formulation of a national rural development strategy with emphasis on alleviation of rural poverty and the enhancement of the quality of rural life. In order to give credence to the new policy focus the government established, in the office of the president, a Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures which would plan and implement projects geared to achieving specific objectives covering infrastructure, agriculture, commerce and industry, education and health. The activities of

the Directorate at the state level are carried out by a state machinery under the office of the governor, with institutional linkages down to the town/village development committee level. The new policy directive had helped in focusing coordinated attention on the multi-faceted problem of rural transformation.

Discussions

10. In the discussions which followed the presentation of the papers the participants sought clarifications on the various points raised and noted that: the shifting of government policy emphasis towards the integrated development of rural settlements was essential to ensure genuine sustainable development in such areas and that the human dimension should always be kept in view in the formulation and implementation of the policies.

Land use planning in rural areas (agenda item 5)

Presentation of papers

11. In his presentation, the participant from Ethiopia noted that the recurrence of drought and the erosion of top soil on slopes had heightened the importance of land use planning as an instrument for the effective planning of rural settlements development. A land use planning project had been initiated in the country with technical assistance provided by UNDP and FAO which, for example, had provided guidance on suitable areas for settlements, forestry, crop husbandry and fuel wood cultivation within the context of the rural restructuring programme. He added that experience in Ethiopia had emphasized the need to take account of natural features, as well as the conservation of the natural resource base, in land use planning.

12. The participant from Nigeria presented data which showed a great imbalance in the provision of infrastructures and services in the rural areas of the different states within the country and pointed out that the imbalance had persisted because of the absence of a machinery for the systematic collection of data which would provide a scientific basis for planning that would ensure equitable distribution of rural facilities. There was no national rural basic needs inventory which could serve as a measurement benchmark for rural development decisions. He stressed the dynamic nature of the planning process and noted that there was an urgent need for ensuring the monitoring and review of land use plans based on up-to-date information. He stated further, that some states had initiated action towards the preparation of detailed land use plans.

Discussions

13. The following issues were emphasized in the course of the discussions generated by the presentation of the papers by the experts:

i) The need for systematic collection of basic data required for preparing and updating land use plans to be used for planning rural development programmes,

ii) The need for case studies of land use planning experience in selected countries to be disseminated among member States. Studies should highlight successes and failures and examine the effect of land tenure systems on the implementation of land use plans, particularly in the rural areas;

iii) Land use planning should, inter alia, aim at natural resource conservation and in this connection, measures for the restoration of degraded lands should be given priority,

iv) Rural settlements planning should be comprehensive, transcending sectoral planning, and must give due recognition to the inter-relationship between infrastructure, agriculture, agro-industry and other non-farm activities for the purpose of increasing rural incomes and generally promoting improved living standards,

v) A sound institutional base is needed to ensure the effective coordination of activities geared to the preparation, upgrading and monitoring of the implementation of land use plans,

vi) Coordination of existing institutional machineries for the planning and implementation of programmes and projects aimed at the transformation of the rural areas is a pressing need in African countries and has to be addressed seriously. In this connection it would be important to ensure cooperation between the umbrella organization or agency and other concerned agencies.

Modalities for the construction of infrastructure and the provision of transportation facilities (agenda item 6)

Presentation of papers

14. The participant from Ethiopia outlined the institutional framework as well as the implementation mechanism for projects under the rural settlement programmes in that country. The development of infrastructures and services was an intrinsic component of the settlement schemes and thus detailed planning was effected before settlers were moved to the new sites. Among the infrastructure and services provided are roads, health services (water supply, pit

latrines and provision of vaccines), schools, clearing of agricultural land and the construction of stores and flour mills. The actual construction of the infrastructures is carried out by the concerned technical ministries with the Ministry of Construction playing an important role. An important aspect of infrastructure construction is the training of suitable members of peasant associations in various disciplines to participate in the management and maintenance of infrastructures. The concerned technical ministries have responsibilities for ensuring that maintenance is carried out. With respect to transportation services, the participant from Ethiopia observed that these were provided primarily by the ministry responsible for road transportation.

15. In his contribution, the participant from Nigeria stated that the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) which has primary responsibility for the formulation of specific rural projects and their implementation had prepared guidelines to be followed by the various State Directorates for Rural Development. The Nigerian government had adopted an integrated implementation strategy involving mobilization of the people and their resources through the town/community unions, age-grades and other similar organizations in partnership with local authorities. With regard to the physical construction of rural infrastructures, the participant from Nigeria observed that as a means of overcoming implementation problems caused by bureaucracies in the ministries, the government had promoted the formation of task forces to deal with specific aspects of rural development projects. A task force is free to liaise with the local governments, autonomous communities, etc. and certain designated technical staff are seconded from the executive ministries or parastatals to work with the task force.

16. The participant from Nigeria added that planned management and maintenance of rural infrastructures by the various ministries and local authorities had failed to materialize and that DFRRI had embarked on arrangements to ensure the proper management and maintenance of the constructed infrastructure. With respect to the provision of transportation services, he stated that this was essentially the responsibility of the private sector. However, in view of recent price increases which had reduced the ability of private entrepreneurs to purchase vehicles, the federal government had decided to provide a certain number of buses, under its mass transit programme, to each of the 310 local government authorities to be operated in the rural areas.

Discussions

17. The discussions which ensued after the presentations by the experts highlighted the following issues:

i) Different technical ministries and departments are usually involved in the determination of the requirements for, and the design and construction of infrastructures. A great degree of cooperation and and harmonization of activities is required to achieve set targets for infrastructure provision;

ii) Imbalances occur in the level of infrastructure provision in different parts of the rural areas arising from historical, social, economic and political factors. There is need for a methodological framework that will lead to an equitable distribution of infrastructure based on predetermined criteria and norms;

iii) Construction technologies that optimize the use of available local resources - capital, labour and materials should be encouraged. Design standards and specifications should be reviewed accordingly to accommodate alternative technologies;

iv) Community efforts in the construction of infrastructure should be encouraged. Towards this end, technical support, including training for the application of appropriate technologies, should be made available to the concerned communities;

v) Maintenance of infrastructures has, very often, not been vigorously pursued with adverse consequences on their serviceability, which in turn leads to a reduction in benefits to the rural dwellers. Organization and implementation of maintenance activities should therefore be programmed at the design stage;

vi) Construction of road infrastructure is only the first step in the improvement of accessibility and mobility. Provision of transportation services should be seen as a second step. Incentives should be given to public bodies and private entrepreneurs to operate transportation to the rural areas;

vii) Non-conventional, but appropriate technologies for the movement of people and goods in the rural areas could offer viable solutions in some situations, and their use should be studied through pilot projects.

Cost implications of rural transformation (agenda item 7)

Presentations

18. In his brief oral presentation, the participant from Ethiopia indicated that even though cost figures for infrastructure construction were available in the country, it had not been possible to organize the necessary data for the meeting because of insufficient advance notice. However, such data

could be assembled and submitted to ECA at a later date. He then drew attention to some general cost figures included in the main document he had prepared for the meeting. Experience from the settlement programmes showed that an expenditure of about $US 2,200 per household had been made in providing services (exclusive of roads, water supply and education) to the settlers within four budget years. The cost of infrastructures and services had been funded from central government resources, public donations and external bilateral and multilateral assistance.

19. The participant from Nigeria also mentioned the lack of detailed cost figures in his main document on account of the same reason cited by the participant from Ethiopia. He however, stated that during the first 18 months of its existence the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures which was constituted to implement government policy for transforming the living conditions of rural Nigerians by means of massive development of infrastructure had received ₦800,591,533 (about $US 180 million) for its programmes. The sources of funds for rural development projects are the federal government (75%), state government (15%), local government (7%) and the local community (3%). He alluded to the high community spirit that existed with regard to the mobilization of funds for infrastructure projects which the communities knew would lead to an improvement of their living conditions.

Discussions

20. The discussions that followed the presentations focused on the issues set out below:

i) Need to undertake comprehensive cost analysis of infrastructures, services and other facilities provided for the enhancement of rural transformation so that measures for achieving cost reduction, where possible, could be formulated and implemented,

ii) There is currently a great imbalance in the allocation of funds to rural development in national development budgets. Policies geared to directing increased financial resources to projects in the rural areas would not only help to bring about transformation of these areas, but would promote development in the country as a whole,

iii) Since governments have to deal with many competing demands for the available scarce financial resources, mobilization of domestic savings should be encouraged. To this end, rural development planning should focus attention on income generating activities, and at the same rural dwellers should be given the necessary incentives to engage in productive ventures;

iv) The use of proven intermediate technologies would help to reduce the cost of providing infrastructures and services;

v) Since available financial resources are limited and the demand for infrastructures in the rural areas is great, a policy geared to step-by-step improvement which provides levels of service commensurate with available resources would be appropriate in some situations;

vi) There is great potential for the mobilization of private donations and voluntary contributions by rural dwellers towards the construction of infrastructures. Such financial contributions should be stimulated and matched with funds from central government, as necessary;

vii) Community involvement in the planning, construction and maintenance of infrastructure as well as in the provision of services should be encouraged. Contribution of labour and other inputs on self-help basis would lead to cost savings;

viii) Mobilization of funds from external sources should be pursued in support of projects that would promote the development of the productive capacity of the rural areas.

D. Recommendations

21. The Expert Group Meeting in its deliberations highlighted the interrelationships between several components of the rural resource base and the national development plan but noted the absence, in many countries, of the information base for effective planning of the development of rural settlements. While recognizing the limitations on national resources, the meeting felt that rural transformation held the key to overall national development in Africa in the future and therefore deserved increased attention by policy and decision-makers. The following recommendations are made in the expectation that they would stimulate action towards improved planning methodologies and techniques for rural settlements development.

Pilot Projects on Planning Methodologies and Techniques

i) Efforts should be made to provide a scientific and technical basis for effective planning of rural settlements development. In this connection consideration should be given to the design and implementation of pilot projects focused on representative zones in rural areas at the sub-national level. The pilot projects should focus on:

(a) Establishment of a methodological framework for rural settlements planning;

(b) Establishing criteria and norms for equitable distribution of infrastructures and services among rural areas;

(c) Formulating guidelines on modalities for the implementation and periodic review of rural settlements development plans;

(d) Identifying education and training needs to sustain planning and implementation programmes giving due recognition to the participation of the local community;

(e) Proposing guidelines on promoting and sustaining the productive capacity of the rural population;

ii) Land use planning research with emphasis on suitability studies should be undertaken as a means of providing a valuable input for the preparation and updating of land-use plans.

Technical publications

22. Governments should seek the support of sub-regional, regional and international organizations for the preparation of technical publications on methodologies and techniques for rural settlements planning. In this connection case studies of rural land use and physical planning as well as rural settlement projects are essential. It is expected that member States would assist international organizations by providing necessary data with regard to their pilot projects.

Institutional support

i) In order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the planning and implementation of rural projects, steps should be taken towards the establishment of a Rural Planning Authority which would be endowed with adequate statutory powers and financial support to take the lead role in all rural planning issues;

ii) Innovative approaches towards effective field implementation of rural based projects should be encouraged. The active involvement of the local communities in the construction and maintenance of rural settlements infrastructures has a key role to play in self-sustained development of the rural hinterland.

Education and Training

.) Education and training should remain an important component of rural transformation strategies. In this regard education curricula need to be revised to promote the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills;

ii) Research on the content of education should be undertaken as a basis for the review of curricula proposed in (i) above;

iii) Training of members of local communities in appropriate technologies for the construction, operation and maintenance of rural infrastructures should be emphasized.

Mobilization of Funds for Rural Transformation Projects

i) As a means of reinforcing their commitment to rural transformation in its entirety, governments should earmark a specific percentage of the national development budget for projects in rural areas and ensure the timely release of such funds,

ii) Innovative approaches to the mobilization of funds from local communities in support of projects should be evolved. In this connection self-help spirit should be stimulated towards donations and voluntary contributions,

iii) Measures for the mobilization of private savings in rural areas should be devised. Accessibility to banking facilities should therefore be promoted,

iv) External funding should be sought for specific infrastructure and services projects with great potential for enhancing self-reliant development in rural areas.

Regional and International Co-operation

i) Sharing of experiences on rural settlements planning methodologies and techniques, including arrangements for the exchange of experts, should be promoted among member States in the spirit of south-south co-operation,

ii) Sub-regional, regional and international organizations should support the efforts of the governments of African countries to evolve operational methodologies and techniques for planning rural transformation. Areas of assistance include:

(a) Technical assistance involving finance and expertise,
(b) Education and training of local professionals and technicians to increase their capacity for rural development planning, and project formulation, design and implementation,
(c) Providing technical publications on planning methodologies and techniques,
(d) Promoting information exchange among African countries and also between them and countries outside the region,
(e) Supporting study visits by experts to other African countries, and the formation of inter-country specialist teams to jointly undertake, over limited periods, ad-hoc studies and projects of mutual benefit to member states;
(f) Supporting research and development on innovative technologies for rural infrastructure and services.

Adoption of the report and closure of the meeting (agenda item 8)

23. After examining the draft report, page by page, the meeting adopted it with some minor amendments.

24. The Chairman thanked ECA for organizing the meeting and expressed the hope that the recommendations adopted would contribute to the effort to improve the living conditions of the rural folk.

25. In his closing address, the representative of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa expressed his appreciation to the participants for contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the meeting and pledged ECA's support to the follow-up of the recommendations. At the same time, he invited international and non-governmental organizations to channel their resources to rural transformation projects in Africa taking into consideration the recommendations adopted by the meeting.